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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 001556

SIPDIS

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TAGS: GH PAREL ECOWAS

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON ACCRA III AND LIBERIA TALKS

Classified By: Polchief Richard Kaminski, reason 1.5 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Ambassador Yates met with Foreign Minister Akufo-Addo July 27, and spoke on the upcoming Accra III peace talks on Cote d'Ivoire, and the convocation of Liberian signatories to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of last summer. The minister's comments focused largely on the mechanics of the two meetings: a "no frills" atmosphere was envisaged, with (he hoped) attention and agreement on central points. He made one request: the latest information the USG has on recent weapons acquisitions by the Gbagbo government. End summary.

¶2. (C) For both Accra III and the Liberian talks, only heads of state, with selected others (Kofi Annan, Ibn Chambas, others) would be participating, he said -- that is, no diplomatic observers allowed. Most of the Ivorian parties would be in Accra by Tuesday, July 27, and pre-talks would commence on Wednesday, July 28, with some expectation of finding common positions on the key issues. From his comments, the minister appeared to suggest that meetings with individual delegations would form the bulk of these Wednesday consultations, rather than some form of collective meeting. Thursday morning, July 29, would see the formal start of the talks. A communique would issue upon the termination of discussions.

¶3. (C) Akufo-Addo had one request: could the USG provide him with the latest information it had on recent weapons acquisitions by the Gbagbo government. Talk in some CI government circles of a "military solution" had ECOWAS concerned. Information on weapons acquisition would be "very useful" at the talks, he said. Ambassador Yates pledged to obtain what information the USG possessed.

¶4. (C) Akufo-Addo explained the late-breaking addition of Liberian talks as President Kufuor's wish to make "the best use" of UNSG Kofi Annan's and AU President Obasanjo's presence. While acknowledging that better communication with Contact Group members on Liberia would have been preferable, he said that Kufuor and ECOWAS wanted to make the best use of the assembled heads of state as well. The Liberian talks would begin as soon as the Cote d'Ivoire III talks finished, either on July 29 or 30. While not directly addressing exactly how the review process on the CPA would proceed, he said that "we all feel" that a firm and directed discussion with the various Liberian parties was needed to keep the peace process "on track."

¶5. (C) Comment. Akufo-Addo was his determinedly focused and attentive self, offering rapid-fire remarks while his aides clustered around him. He offered no substantive insights into policy issues on either Accra III or the Liberian CPA review, but did promise a complete briefing upon their conclusion. End comment.

YATES